

## What counts as 'responding'? Contingency on previous speaker contribution as a feature of interactional competence<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The ability to interact with others has gained recognition as part of the L2 speaking construct in the assessment literature and in high- and low-stakes speaking assessments. This paper first presents a review of the literature on interactional competence (IC) in L2 learning and assessment. It then discusses a particular feature – *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution* – that emerged as a *de facto* construct feature of IC oriented to by both candidates and examiners within the school-based group speaking assessment in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) English Language Examination. Previous studies have, similarly, argued for the importance of 'responding to' or linking one's own talk to previous speakers' contributions as a way of demonstrating comprehension of co-participants' talk. However, what counts as such a response has yet to be explored systematically. This paper presents a conversation analytic study of the candidate discourse in the assessed group interactions, identifying three conversational actions through which student-candidates construct contingent responses to co-participants. The thick description about the nature of contingent responses lays the groundwork for further empirical investigations on the relevance of this IC feature and its proficiency implications.

### I. Introduction

The ability to interact with others is now widely recognized as an integral part of L2 speaking ability. Such an ability is elicited and assessed in both high- and low-stakes L2 speaking assessments through the paired/group format and is reflected in the rating descriptors. Examples include the Cambridge English Exam Suite, the HKDSE English Language in Hong Kong, GEPT in Taiwan, CET-SET in China, and university in-house English assessments (May, 2009, 2011). The *Common European Framework* (CEFR) also divides speaking ability into *interaction* and *production*, and provides descriptors of performance in terms of interaction across the six proficiency levels (Council of Europe, 2001, pp.28-29). The conceptualization of interactional ability as part of the L2 speaking construct is also evidenced by an expanding body of literature on interactional competence (IC) in both the fields of L2 learning and L2 assessment. This paper first reviews the theoretical work and the L2 learning and assessment research literature on IC, and considers how IC is conceptualized in the different research strands. It then

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<sup>1</sup> This extract is taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/ltj>

explores *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution* as a particular IC feature relevant in paired/group speaking assessments.

Interactional competence (IC) refers to 'a relationship between participants' employment of linguistic and interactional resources and the contexts in which they are employed' (Young, 2008, p.100). In a more nuanced definition given by Hall and Pakarek Doehler (2011), IC consists of:

- [the] knowledge of social-context-specific communicative events or activity types, their typical goals and trajectories of actions by which the goals are realized and the conventional behaviors by which participant roles and role relationships are accomplished
- the ability to deploy and to recognize context-specific patterns by which turns are taken, actions are organized, and practices are ordered [, and]
- the prosodic, linguistic, sequential and non-verbal resources conventionally used for producing and interpreting turns and actions.

(pp.1-2)

In other words, IC represents both the knowledge about the interactional context and the conventional patterns of behavior within it, and the ability to conduct oneself accordingly using appropriate verbal and non-verbal resources. In several authors' description of the construct (e.g. Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2008; Young, 2000, 2008), interactional competence is seen as encompassing as well as going beyond the formal systems of language. IC is posited as a new, alternative theoretical conceptualization of the ability for language use that has developed from earlier models of language competence (e.g. communicative competence, communicative language ability), rather than being a subordinate component within them. Within this theoretical view, aspects of grammar, vocabulary, and phonology in speaking performance are to be evaluated not only in terms of range and accuracy, and as separate assessment criteria, but also in terms of the appropriateness of their use in the interactional context. Notably, however, the conceptualization of IC seems slightly different in language assessment, as is explored later.

Discussions of IC often reference several theoretical conceptualizations of 'language competence' as its precedents. These include Hymes' (1972) *communicative competence* that accounts for contextual and sociocultural variation in language use and acquisition, Canale and Swain's (1980) *communicative competence* to guide the development of communicative approaches to L2 teaching and assessment, and Bachman's (1990) *communicative language ability* for measuring language performance in testing/assessment contexts. However, McNamara (1997) argues that conventional approaches to language assessment based on these models at the time had an overarching focus on the individual's ability, such that the candidate is viewed 'in a

strangely isolated light', and 'held to bear the brunt of the responsibility for the performance' (pp.452-453). The interpretation of candidate performance within the notion of IC, is in stark contrast to this view.

Some applied linguists (e.g. He & Young, 1998; Kramsch, 1986; McNamara, 1997) began to call for a 'social turn' in theories of language competence – a shift from a predominantly psychological orientation in L2 teaching, learning and assessment to also considering the social dimension. McNamara (1997) cautions that, while the psychological orientation in L2 performance assessments is understandable as partly aiming to 'model the nature of communicative ability within the individual' (p.446), an exclusively psychological model of language ability is problematic in two ways: the dynamic aspects of social interaction are seen as 'a source of unwanted variance in test scores' rather than part of what is assessed (p.451), and performance 'is seen as in some way a simple projection of the candidate's ability' (p.453). He thus argues that the social nature of performance needs to be acknowledged in the field.

The notion of interactional competence gives the social dimension of language competence its due recognition. Within Young's model of IC, a 'weak' view of IC is that 'an individual's knowledge and employment of [identity, linguistic, and interactional] resources is contingent on what other participants do' (Young, 2011, p.430). That is, the manifestation in performance of how interactionally competent an individual is depends on what the co-participants in the same interaction do. To understand this, consider the analogy of how much a Grand Slam tennis champion can demonstrate his/her skill playing against a complete novice who cannot even return the ball, compared to playing against a fellow professional. This view of IC aligns with Jacoby and Ochs' (1995) notion of *co-construction*, that 'language, discourse and their effects cannot be considered deterministically preordained by assumed constructs of individual competence' (p.177). Young has also presented a more radical, 'strong' view that IC is 'not the knowledge or the possession of an individual person, but it is co-constructed by all participants in a discursive practice' (Young, 2008, p.101), and that 'we cannot say that an individual is interactionally competent' (He & Young, 1998, p.7). Many researchers do not seem to go as far as Young in dismissing any individual contribution in the conception of interactional competence, but the co-constructed nature of interactional performance and achievements, on which interpretations about individual ability are based, is now widely acknowledged in the literature.

The recognition that what can be observed about one's interactional ability is *co-constructed by all participants involved* has been a key development in the research on speaking assessments within the last twenty years. McNamara (1997) illustrates this with the example of a candidate in the Occupational English Test becoming 'handicapped' when the interlocutor was sarcastic, interruptive, or too passive. In a rater study by May (2009), the co-constructed nature of interactional performance was attested by the same candidate receiving a Band 2 and a Band 4 (out of 6) score by the same rater when the candidate was paired with different partners, resulting in different patterns of interaction. Authors writing on paired/group speaking assessments almost invariably reference or contribute empirical evidence to the co-constructed nature of IC (e.g. Brooks, 2009; Brown, 2003; Galaczi, 2008; Gan, 2010; Gan *et al.*, 2008; May, 2009, 2011; Nakatsuhara, 2013; Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014).

With almost unanimous consensus about the co-constructed nature of IC, there is, however, much ambivalence and debate among language testing scholars on how to deal with it. Some have advocated awarding shared scores for the interactional aspects of candidates' performance in acknowledgement of the co-constructed nature of IC (Swain, in an interview with Fox, 2005; May, 2009, 2011), while others have emphasized the need to disentangle individual contribution to co-constructed interactional performance (e.g. Fulcher, 2010). Taylor and Wigglesworth (2009) also caution about the difficulty for raters to handle in real time awarding shared and individual scores for different assessment criteria. This reflects, vividly, the tension among the nature of (interactional) language ability, the psychometric orientation of language assessments, and their institutional consequences, as McNamara and Roever (2006) aptly put it:

Institutional needs are in line with the psychometric orientation to individual cognitive ability: what is required is not a faithful account of the interaction but a score about individual candidates that can then be fed into the institutional decision-making procedures. (p.51)

In both the L2 learning and L2 assessment literature, there has been an increasing interest in examining the nature of spoken interactional ability. This body of research has offered considerable but somewhat different insights on the questions of 'What are the features of L2 interactional competence?', and more specifically, 'What are the features of L2 IC within a paired/group speaking assessment context?'.

In the L2 learning literature, the description and investigation of what constitutes IC often draws on conversation analysis (CA). CA-based definitions of IC can be found in numerous

works (e.g. Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2008; Roever & Kasper, this issue), and IC is often described in terms of the ability to handle aspects of interaction including turn-taking, sequential (and preference) organization, repair, turn design and action formation, and topic initiation and development. Pekarek Doehler and Berger (2016) summarize it well:

IC involves the development of “methods” for action [...] that is, systematic procedures [...] by which members of a social group organize their interactional conduct in mutually understandable and accountable ways (p.2).

There is now a host of research that tracks the development of L2 interactional competence, and evidence of development commonly cited includes (1) shifts from peripheral participation to taking initiating roles in different interactional contexts (e.g. Achiba, 2012; Hellermann, 2006; Young & Miller, 2004), and (2) changes in the use of linguistic resources to accomplish interactional actions (e.g. Masuda, 2011; Ohta, 2001). In a review of CA literature on L2 IC, Pekarek Doehler and Pochon-Berger (2015) synthesize the observations of IC development in L2 learners as involving the diversification of techniques/methods for interaction, increased efficiency in recipient-designing one’s talk to fit the here-and-now of the interaction, as well as increased capacity in monitoring the linguistic details of prior talk by co-participants and in using grammar as a resource for interaction.

In the L2 assessment literature, rater studies constitute a considerable proportion of the research concerning IC. Features of IC found to be salient to raters include conversational management, interactive listening, using body language, and developing one’s own and others’ ideas, and helping co-participants (Ducasse & Brown, 2009; May, 2011; Orr, 2002). Among studies of candidate discourse, topic initiation and development were often found to be salient IC features (Galaczi, 2014; Gan, Davison, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008; Gan, 2010). Galaczi (2014) found that listener support strategies and turn-taking management were also features distinguishing performances at CEFR levels B1 to C2. Notably, however, there is less of an analytic focus on the use of formal aspects of language to accomplish interactional actions (e.g. the appropriate/inappropriate use of intonation and other prosodic cues to signal turn-taking or agreement/disagreement). Moreover, formal and interactional aspects of language are often treated as separate areas in assessments themselves as reflected in rating scales, implying a potentially different view of the construct of IC than that in the L2 learning literature.

From the review so far, we are beginning to see some 'fuzzy' areas in which views about the scope and components of IC diverge among the theoretical work, the L2 learning literature and the L2 assessment literature. IC is seen as encompassing and going beyond formal aspects of language in its theoretical formulation, while L2 assessment research has seen it mostly in light of interactional conduct and management. In the L2 learning literature, context-sensitive conduct, active participation in particular contexts, and the repertoire of linguistic resources in accomplishing interactional actions seem to be key evidence of development, while these features are less apparent in the existing L2 assessment research on IC (but see Kim, this issue; Roever & Kasper, this issue; Ross, this issue).

This paper explores a particular interactional feature, *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution*, whereby a current speaker refers back to or topicalizes elements in a previous speaker's talk. I argue that this is a highly relevant feature that could be included in the construct of IC within paired/group speaking assessment contexts. As will be shown, candidates use contingent responses to discursively construct themselves as 'interactionally competent' in assessed group interactions, and the feature is salient to oral examiners within the assessment context in this study.

Notably, several speaking assessment studies have referenced this feature using somewhat different terminology. Young and Milanovic (1992) define a *contingent* response as one 'in which the content and often the form of the utterance depend in some way on the previous utterance' and that its topic is 'coreferential' with that of the preceding turn (p.404). Gan (2010) describes responding contingently to a co-participant as 'to fit his or her comment closely to the immediately preceding utterance' (p.595). A similar criterion is used to evaluate candidates' interactive performance in other studies. For example, Galaczi (2008) notes that a characteristic feature of the *collaborative* pattern of interaction is to 'both say something that relates to what has been said before and introduce something new' (p.98). Similarly, Nitta and Nakatsuhara (2014) examine how collaborative the interaction is by reference to whether candidates are 'incorporating their partner's ideas into their own speech' (p.167). Nonetheless, the means by which a response 'depends on', 'relates to', or 'incorporates' a co-participant's contribution has not been explored systematically, nor do examiners' comments found in rater studies or in published examination reports offer us insights other than in general terms such as 'follow up' or 'respond appropriately to' previous speakers' talk.

Therefore, through conversation analysis of candidate discourse in a group speaking assessment, this paper aims to gain insights on how students produce contingent responses linking their talk to previous speaker contribution. More specifically, it addresses the question:

*What conversational actions in a current speaker's turn might constitute a response that is contingent on previous speaker contribution?*

## **II. The study**

The analysis reported here is part of a larger study (AUTHOR, 2015a), which explored various issues in the assessment of interactional competence within the School-based Assessment (SBA) component of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) English Language Examination. In the larger study, three forms of data were collected and examined: (1) video-recorded candidate discourse in actual assessment events for the SBA, (2) stimulated recall interviews with a) student-candidates and b) teacher-raters, and (3) mock assessments with preparation time video-recorded.

Taking a conversation analytic (CA) methodological approach, the video-recorded candidate discourse in the SBA group interactions is explored, focusing on how students discursively construct themselves as interactionally competent through producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution. The context and details of this CA-based study, and where it may be different from conventional language testing studies, are explained in the following.

### *1 Assessment context*

The SBA counts towards 15% of the subject mark for HKDSE English Language, consisting of two assessments: One assessment is based on an extensive reading/viewing program (Part A), and the other is based on the Elective Modules (e.g. workplace communication, social issues) of the upper secondary curriculum (Part B). Each student engages in (1) an *Individual Presentation* or (2) a *Group Interaction* for Part A, and then an assessment in the other format in Part B. More details of the SBA, including the rating descriptors, can be found in the Teachers' Handbook (HKEAA, 2014) available online.

### *2 Student-candidates*

The students in this study were from two coeducational public secondary schools (School L and School P) in Hong Kong. Both schools used English as the medium of instruction (EMI), and were known to the general public as 'band 1' schools admitting the highest-achieving primary school graduates. At the time of data collection, the students were Secondary 5 (in Part A) or Secondary 6 (in Part B), and would have learned English at school for 11-12 years.

An independent proficiency score for the students was not available, as they had not taken any standardized English proficiency test (not even the HKDSE) at the time. For the students' in Extracts 1-8 whose contingent responses are analyzed below, their teacher-awarded scores for the Group Interaction task ranged from 18 to 23 (out of 24), corresponding to Levels 5 to 5\*\* in the Speaking section of HKDSE English Language, according to the teacher-raters who awarded these scores. On that basis, a rough estimate of their oral proficiency levels would be between IELTS 6.81 and 7.77 (HKEAA, 2013b).

In accordance with the SBA guidelines (HKEAA, 2014), students were free to choose their own group members. Thus, test-taker characteristics (e.g. proficiency level, gender, and personality) were not controlled within and across student groups as they would have been in an experimental study.

### *3 The Group Interaction task*

In this study, students in groups of 4 took part in a discussion for approximately 8 minutes, which was assessed by their English teacher. Discussion tasks in Part A (Extracts 1-3 below) were based on a movie the student groups had watched together, with students talking about their favorite characters, the main message, and other aspects of the movie. Discussion tasks in Part B (Extracts 4-8 below) were based on the 'workplace communication' elective module, with students assuming the roles of marketing team members discussing ways to promote a certain product (see Appendix A for sample discussion task prompts).

Preparation time for the discussion task varied greatly among different schools, and has been a highly controversial issue. With SBA being an assessment-*for*-learning initiative, the assessment policy placed considerable emphasis on flexible task design and implementation by teachers tailored to students' needs. Such a policy then translated into diverse assessment practices. In this study, students from School L were given 10 minutes preparation time, and students from School P 2-6 hours. With some students approaching the task by pre-planning or



even pre-scripting the interaction, I have argued elsewhere that the practice of providing extended preparation time may hinder authentic interaction (AUTHOR, 2015b) and impede discrimination between stronger and weaker students (AUTHOR, under review). However, regardless of different planning time conditions, students demonstrated similar patterns in discursively constructing their responses as spontaneous and contingent on previous speaker contribution (rather than pre-planned), as evidenced in the analysis below.

#### *4 Data*

The data extracts analyzed below come from video recordings of 42 groups of student-candidates completing the Group Interaction task, obtained from three classes: School L (1 class) and School P (2 classes). Among these, 23 group interactions were from Part A of the SBA (based on movie viewing), and 19 from Part B (based on the elective modules). The group interactions in Parts A and B were performed by students from the same three classes. However, students were in either the same or different grouping based on their own decision. The extracts in the analysis each has an identifier: P or L indicates the school, and A or B indicates Part A vs. Part B. The next two digits are the video number, followed by the line numbers from the full transcript.

#### *5 Method of analysis*

The video-recorded candidate discourse was transcribed (see Appendix B for transcription symbols) and analyzed using a conversation analytic (CA) approach. Following recommendations for implementing this methodology (Liddicoat, 2011; Psathas, 1995; ten Have, 2007), the first stage of analysis involved repeated listening/viewing of the recordings and reviewing the transcripts to identify interactional phenomena of potential analytic interest. This data-driven analytic process requires an openness to interesting phenomena and emerging patterns. The analyst needs to refrain from viewing the data through the lens of pre-existing theories, categories, or hypotheses and merely looking for instances which fit the theories/hypotheses in the data (Galaczi, 2014; Psathas, 1995). For example, test-takers' characteristics are often seen as necessary information to interpret the data in (quantitative) language testing studies. In CA-based studies, these characteristics are not brought to the analysis (cannot be assumed to influence the interaction) unless they are demonstrably relevant

within the interaction, such as being commented on by participants themselves. Accordingly, the data were examined through noticing what conversational actions are being performed and how they are performed, or noticing particular features of talk and the actions they accomplish (Schegloff, 1996). For each group interaction, observations were noted, first in the transcript margins and then in a separate document, together with preliminary analytic accounts (ten Have, 2007).

Following this procedure, various conversational phenomena of analytic interest emerged, such as turn-taking devices to pass/gain the floor, gaps and overlaps, and the turn design of agreeing/disagreeing responses. Meanwhile, several salient themes emerged as characterizing the group interactions. These included features of pre-planning and pre-scripting among group interactions in one school (see AUTHOR, 2015b), negotiation between conflicting identities, and talk designed for an overhearing audience. Also emerging was a characteristic pattern in which, overwhelmingly, students designed their turns as consisting of two successive components: (1) 'responding' to the previous speakers' talk, and (2) delivering their own ideas. This developed into the following themes focused on in this paper:

- A) students orient to producing responses which are contingent on previous speaker contribution; and
- B) students make use of different conversational actions to construct or highlight their response turn as contingent on previous speaker contribution.

The analysis then proceeded with building collections of instances for the conversational phenomena and themes. Afterwards, for each conversational action identified (*formulating*, *accounting*, *extending*), the instances were compared in terms of their linguistic format, turn design, and co-occurring features. This enabled refinement of the analytic account for each phenomenon (Liddicoat 2011). The overall procedure resembles that of analytic induction (ten Have, 2007).

### **III. Analysis**

In accordance with conventions in CA-based studies, this section presents illustrative examples which representatively demonstrate the three conversational actions (*formulating*,

*accounting, extending*) and variants of each action as identified in the analysis, through which students discursively construct their responses as contingent on previous speaker contribution.

Firstly, student-candidates link their talk to previous speaker contribution through *formulating* the preceding talk (Deppermann, 2011; Heritage & Watson, 1979), whereby the current speaker offers a paraphrase or reformulation of some content in a previous speaker's talk (e.g. an assertion, a viewpoint). This action often constitutes the first of a two-part turn with a 'response' component and a 'content delivery' component. Through this turn design, the student makes an overt display of having understood and responded to a previous speaker before moving on to deliver their own ideas. In Extract 1 below, the students are discussing the causes of misunderstanding between the mother (Mrs Coleman) and the daughter (Anna) in the movie *Freaky Friday*. (See Appendix B for transcription symbols.)

#### **Extract 1 – PA11: 21-42**

1. D: ..... Mm, do you guys remember: (.) after eating the (.) lucky  
2. c- cookies, Anna turns (.) into her mom, and the first thing she  
3. do is (...) go shopping (.) and (.) have a haircut. I think it  
4. is the best (.) proof (.) of the:: (.) ↓theory (.) generation  
5. gap. Mm:: Anna (.) doesn- not- doesn understand why her mother  
6. dress up like this, and Mrs Coleman don't want to be trendy.  
7. R: -> Uhm, that's exactly what I want to point out. Uhm young people  
8. -> always try to be:: (.) fashionable whereas (.) adults always want  
9. something simple. Maybe that's- what- you guys call the  
10. generation gap, and- thi- that i- this is where: the (.) uhm (.)  
11. misunderstanding exist. ↑What I want to t- what I want to add  
12. is, .....

In lines 1-6, D cites a scene from the movie to exemplify a previous speaker's point that one main cause of misunderstanding is the generation gap between the two characters. In the following turn, after beginning with 'that's exactly what I want to point out' (line 7), which displays affiliation (Steensig & Drew, 2008) with D's viewpoint, R reiterates D's idea by furnishing a recipient formulation 'young people always... whereas adults always want something simple' (lines 7-9). Her formulation *re*-presents in her own words D's example (lines 1-3) and his point about the generation gap between the two characters (lines 5-6), generalizing the assertion to the collective categories of 'young people' and 'adults'. R then moves on to

deliver her own idea, prefacing it with 'what I want to add is' (lines 11-12). Thus, we can see how R designs her turn as first responding to the previous speaker (lines 7-11) through formulating his prior talk, then delivering her own idea (lines 11-12). In Extract 2, students I and J are discussing the main message of the movie *Avatar*.

#### **Extract 2 – LA07: 28-39**

1. I: ..... And then, uh:: about the:: (.) meaning of the:: (.) movie
2. is that (.) uh: (.) we must protect the: (.) environment (.) that
3. we:: (.) uh haven't (.) destroyed before.=
4. J: -> =(uh oh >yes conveying) the message that< we have to strike the:
5. -> right balance between the environment protection and the uhm:
6. uhm: economic or::erm human develops- the development of man↓
7. kind.=And, aBOUT the: uhm (.) the >f- three dimension
8. effect.....

After student I has taken quite a bit of time (note the pauses) to provide his characterization of the meaning of the movie *Avatar* (lines 1-3), J comes in quickly (note the latching and the faster-than-surrounding talk) to offer a formulation (lines 4-7) that re-presents in his own words I's assertion in the preceding turn. The interesting point to observe here is how J utilizes more complex language (e.g. idiomatic expression, nominalization) in representing I's idea, as well as transforming it to something conceptually more sophisticated; that is, the idea of striking a balance between environmental protection and economic development.

These two examples demonstrate how current speakers may recap the content of a previous speaker's talk with a substantive paraphrase or reformulation. However, formulation of previous speaker contribution can sometimes be formatted quite 'minimally' through *notionalization* (Deppermann, 2011), i.e. condensing prior speakers' ideas into nouns or short phrases. In Extract 3, the students are talking about their favorite characters from *Toy Story 3*.

### Extract 3 – LA06: 1-38

1. O: .....((7 lines omitted)) and of course Woody, who is my favorite  
2. character. Uh why I love Woody so much is that he is such a great  
3. leader. And in the m- movie, uh- in many ways he shows that he is  
4. really an outstanding leader. ....((5 lines omitted))  
5. And- (.) when in the great escape, uh: (.) Woody shows that he::  
6. knows (the wel-) teammates well by: uhm (.) he uses (.) the-  
7. persona<sup>l</sup>ities and the character-istics of his members well to  
8. make the great escape more efficiently. .h Uh for example uh .h  
9. Mr Potato Head is very grumpy and his (.) arms and legs can move:  
10. uh without linking to >his body and Woody use that< uh to (.)  
11. make- the- grea- (.) great e- escape a succes- succeeds, so, I  
12. really love Woody.  
13. T: Uhm I agree with you.=I'd- I think apart from (.) Woody's good at  
14. decision-making, I think (.) uh he's loyal to his friends and  
15. honest. Uh for example uh ..... ((10 lines omitted))

T's response turn follows a very lengthy opening turn by O, who provides a detailed account for choosing Woody as her favorite character in *Toy Story 3* (lines 1-12). T takes an extended turn herself, with a substantial portion of it dedicated to giving her own reasons for also choosing Woody. However, she does first respond to O with 'I agree with you' (line 13) and a formulation (lines 13-14) of O's ideas expressed in the preceding turn. Note how T's formulation 'apart from Woody's good at decision-making' notionalizes and condenses into a short phrase (albeit ungrammatical) O's lengthy portrayal of how Woody made good use of other characters' individual strengths in helping them all escape from danger. Note, further, that T's formulation has *transformed* O's depiction of Woody into a different, yet sensible and coherent interpretation. O's original depiction is that Woody is 'a great leader' (lines 2-3) and 'knows his teammates well' (line 6). T's formulation (lines 13-14) neither repeats nor paraphrases these words. However, her attribution of Woody as being 'good at decision-making' is consistent with O's ascription of Woody as a good leader and her narrative of the relevant scene.

Therefore, we can see that recipient formulations can be *transformative* of previous speakers' talk (Deppermann, 2011; Heritage & Watson, 1979), as in Extract 1 when R

generalized D's assertion about the generation gap between the two characters to collective categories of people; in Extract 2 when J transformed I's characterization of the movie's message about environmental protection into one about conflicting goals of human endeavors; and in Extract 3 when T interpreted and notionalized O's portrayal of their shared favorite character. Due to their transformative nature, recipient formulations have been argued in the conversation analytic literature to be 'unequivocal displays of understanding' compared to verbatim repeat utterances (Heritage & Watson, 1979, p.129); 'a method for showing active reciprocity [...and] interest in the addressee' (Bolden, 2010, p.27); and positioning the formulating speaker 'not as a neutral conduit but an active interpreter of the preceding talk' (Hutchby, 2005, p.310).

The second conversational action that student-candidates commonly use to link their own talk to that of previous speakers' is *accounting* for their disagreement (or sometimes even their agreement) with them. Extracts 4 and 5 are of group discussions on the topic of product promotion. In Extract 4, the students are talking about the consumer group(s) their tablet computer product should target. In Extract 5, the students are deciding which skincare product to promote.

#### **Extract 4 – PB06: 36-45**

1. R: Mm, I suggest that we should include children as our target
2. group. Because uh children love playing computer games, an::d,
3. >right<, they have large incentive to buy the (.) tablet
4. computer as (.) they can (.) when they buy the- tablet computer,
5. they can play computer games: (.) uh everywhere.
6. Y: -> Uhm: I'm sorry. I don't (.) agree with you, because I think
7. that (.) children might not have purchasing power. I think they
8. (.) cannot afford to buy: anything.
9. A: -> I think it is not a good idea because (.) tablet computers'
10. main function is not playing games.

#### **Extract 5 – PB11: 9-23**

1. Y: Mm. I think::: maybe we can:: (.) uh: choose tea trees oil, uh
2. because having pimple is: the main concern of woman{women},
3. and:: it is common for pe- uh woman{women} to use the: tea
4. trees oil. Do you think that it is a good idea?
5. K: -> Uhm: I don't think so, even though:: (.) tea tree oil can treat
6. pimples, uhm but it can only treat the- the symptoms, but not
7. the root case, uhm so I suggest that uh we should create (.)
8. lotion which can moisten our skin, uh one of the function is to
9. prevent (.) pimples caused by dry skin. Uhm:: do you think:: >do
10. you agree<? ((turns to S))
11. S: Mm. I can't agree more. ((K now turns to R))
12. R: Mm. It sounds great. Uhm from our: past experience, we apply: (.)
13. uh the marketing four Ps (.) strategy, .....

In Extract 4, both Y and A disagree with R's suggestion to include children as a target group for their tablet computer product. In Extract 5, K challenges Y's idea of choosing tea tree oil as the skincare product to promote. These turns exhibit design features of 'dispreferred' responses (Liddicoat, 2011; Schegloff, 2007): delay through hesitation (line 6, Extract 4; line 5, Extract 5), apology (line 6, Extract 4), and an account explaining the reason for disagreeing (lines 6-8 and 9-10, Extract 4; lines 5-7, Extract 5).

Notice how in each instance the account for disagreeing addresses the previous speaker's point and topicalizes some element(s) of the prior talk. Y's account (Extract 4) addresses R's suggestion of including children as the target group for the tablet computer (lines 1-2) and topicalizes it in terms of purchasing power, while A's account for disagreeing picks up on R's idea that the tablet computer can be used for playing games (lines 4-5). In Extract 5, K's account topicalizes Y's suggestion of promoting the tea tree oil product by commenting on its limitation, and paves the way for her alternative suggestion (lines 7-9). In so doing, these students demonstrate that they have understood and responded to the previous speakers' talk. Regardless of their affiliative/disaffiliative stance vis-à-vis the previous speakers' positions, an account for agreeing/disagreeing enables the students to topicalize elements of co-participants' prior talk. This resembles the pattern of 'stepwise topic transition' identified in Gan *et al.* (2008), where the current speaker refers to the content in the previous turn and introduces new elements as something relevant, as well as the *collaborative* pattern identified in Galaczi (2008), through which candidates in FCE paired interactions demonstrate ability to co-construct discourse with others.

The potency (or rather, necessity) of the conversational action of accounting for agreeing/disagreeing to demonstrate comprehension of co-participants' talk in the group speaking assessment context can be further illustrated in the following example, in which there is a range of agreeing/disagreeing responses. None of the responses has developed the previous speaker's idea substantively, but the disagreeing response with an account seems to be the only one which has incorporated content elements from the previous speaker's turn. In Extract 6, students are brainstorming the 'special features' of their tablet computer product.

#### Extract 6 – PB06: 54-67

1. Y: Mm! Apart from: special order, we ha::ve special shape. (.) Uhm
2. such a::s: heart, star, or diamond. It's special.
3. A: Yes.=I think the tablet computer (.) mm have 3D projection
4. function. It can project 3D image, so that we can: watch 3D
5. movies.
6. D: Oh, it's (.) very great. But how about convenience?=I think uh
7. the tablet computer can be carried (.) to: everywhere and it's
8. very convenient.
9. Y: Uhm: I'm sorry I'm afraid I don't agree with you, because most
10. of the tablet computers are convenient. However, I thin:k (.)
11. thin can be one of our: special features, because it is only
12. zero <point three::> M M.
13. (1.4)
14. R: °Mm.° Beside, this- tablet computer is waterproof. Uh: (.) if
15. we- if you (.) overturn a cup of water (.) on the- this (.)
16. tablet computer, it still work. Uh I think it's really
17. important for some careless users.

In discussing the features of the tablet computer product, all four turns by A, D, Y, and R following Y's turn in lines 1-2 take roughly the same structure where the current speaker first gives some form of reaction to the previous speaker, then proffers his/her own idea about the special features. A begins her turn with an agreement token 'yes' (line 3). However, this is latched onto the next component in which she delivers her own idea about the '3D projection function'. It thus appears ambiguous whether A's 'yes' displays her agreement with Y, or simply acknowledges Y's turn completion and signals the beginning of her own speakership. D proffers



a more overt positive assessment 'oh, it's very great' (line 6) in response to A's idea, but then moves on to propose another special feature 'convenience'. R's response (lines 14-17) to the previous speaker's idea is the most minimal and with an ambiguous stance: he responds with an acknowledgement token 'mm' uttered in low volume, followed by delivering and developing his own idea.

While these three responses by A, D, and R can be considered *relevant* and are constructed as such through 'beside[s]' (line 14) and 'but how about' (line 6), where the students deliver on-topic talk around 'special features', the substantive content of their turns are not *contingent* on the previous speakers' contributions. In other words, they do not refer back to or topicalize elements of the previous speakers' talk. In contrast, Y's disagreeing response with the account 'because most of the tablet computers are convenient' (lines 9-10) is the only one among the four responses (lines 3-17) that incorporates content elements from the previous speaker's turn (lines 7-8), albeit rather briefly.

In the CA literature about everyday conversation, it has been argued that agreeing/disagreeing or displaying affiliative/disaffiliative stance represents the speaker claiming 'epistemic access' to the previous speaker's stance (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013). However, the relevant response tokens (e.g. 'yes') or formulaic expressions (e.g. 'I agree with you') are often deemed inadequate as evidence of understanding a previous speaker's talk within speaking assessment contexts (AUTHOR, 2015a; Galaczi, 2008; Gan, 2010, Luk, 2010). By furnishing an account for agreeing/disagreeing, the current speaker constructs a response in which the substantive content is contingent on a previous speaker's contribution. It is therefore understandable that, while an account is a typical feature of dispreferred actions (e.g. declining an invitation or request; disagreeing), it is not uncommon to see students accounting for their agreement with previous speakers in the SBA group interactions (AUTHOR, 2015a). In fact, some oral examiners consider it a 'required' component in a response:

While it is true that the majority of candidates showed some ability to interact, too often they used phrases such as "I agree", "Your idea is great" or "I get your point" **without providing further elaboration.**

(HKEAA, 2013a, p.181)

A third conversational action through which student-candidates link their responses to previous speakers' contributions is *extending* ideas that co-participants have proposed in the

prior turn or earlier in the discussion. Such action of extending others' contributions is often accomplished through providing examples, more specific details, or additional arguments in support of the idea. Extract 7 shows students talking about promotional strategies for their smartphone products.

### Extract 7 – PB10: 55-68

1. V: [Uhm: let's add some free trials (.) during the promotion
2. in: the shopping mall,
3. \\so that uh the public can experience the functions
4. \\((E takes note card out of her pocket and starts browsing))
5. such as the: (.) apps (.) of our smartphones.
6. \\Then, the pub- uh the:: (.) public will have the
7. \\((E looks up towards V))
8. chance to (.) get to u- know our °smartphones°.
9. E: Mm. Uh:: for:: the:: office workers themself, they can try: .h the
10. special features uh: (.) in the shopping mall (.) uh in person,
11. like, uh: they can experience that they can makes own schedule, and
12. send text messages to their colleagues, and any other things. So,
13. they will become more familiar with the functions that provide by
14. our s:martphones to them.

V proposes the idea of offering 'free trials' of the smartphone products as a promotional strategy (lines 1-8). In the turn that follows (lines 9-14), rather than giving an agreeing/disagreeing response typical among the SBA group interactions, E delivers a more elaborated version of V's proposal, thereby extending her idea. Here, E first formulates V's idea in language that is more explicitly relevant to the task (the sub-topic 'special features') and the discussion so far ('office workers' as the product's target group), by paraphrasing V's 'the public can experience the functions' (line 3) into 'the office workers... can try the special features' (lines 9-10). E then extends and adds her own contribution to V's 'free trials' idea by offering specific examples of how potential customers can experience the smartphones' functions – 'make[s] own schedule,

and send text messages...' (lines 11-12). It is worth noting that this is a response with ideas pre-planned during the preparation time before the assessed interaction, evidenced by E's reference to her note card (lines 3-5) and confirmed in the stimulated recall (AUTHOR, 2015a). A pre-planned response notwithstanding, E is able to forge the appearance of constructing a spontaneous response contingent on V's contribution. In Extract 8, another student group is discussing promotional strategies for their nutritional supplement product for weight loss.

### Extract 8 – PB14Mock: 85-99

1. T: °Uhm::° (.) I think sell:: our product to school by free gift is
2. (to me) is a good idea also. .hh Because can let students to try
3. our products, and:: (.) and:: understand more: (.) our:: (.) our:
4. fo- our features of our products.
5. ((turns from note card to K)) °What do you think?°
6. S: \\You guy got a- (you) got a good poi:nt.
7. \\((glances across the group))
8. And I think uh:: we can-
9. or- \\>just similar to< what XX((name of T)) uh said,
10. \\((gestures to T))
11. uhm we can: give some fr- free goods to schools and cooperate with
12. them, and promote our product to- the student who:: got an: who
13. have obesity p- the problem of (.) obesity. So uh we can take
14. reference for their BMI to promote our products and, .h (on one
15. side) we can help (.) uh better (health){help}, on their health.

After T suggests providing 'free gifts' of their nutritional product to schools so that students can try out the product (lines 1-5), S self-selects to take the next turn. She opens with a positive comment 'you guy[s] got a good point' that collectively addresses the group (lines 6-7). This can be seen as her attempt to economically acknowledge receipt and claim understanding of all the ideas proposed by the three co-participants thus far, given that five substantial turns (not shown) have passed since her last turn to speak. However, while it does the job of claiming understanding of prior talk within the interaction itself, this affiliative comment alone may not be regarded by the teacher-rater as unequivocal evidence that demonstrates understanding of co-participants' talk.

S then extends the previous speaker T's idea of giving free samples to schools with more specific details of organizing a health awareness event in cooperation with schools (line 11), which involves promoting their product to students with 'the problem of obesity' (lines 12-13) and measuring their BMI (line 14). Particularly noteworthy is how S prefaces this with the appositional phrase 'just similar to what XX((name of T)) uh said' and simultaneously gestures to T (lines 9-10), making an explicit reference to T's preceding talk. Here, in attributing the forthcoming talk as building on T's idea, S is not only extending the previous speaker's idea, but foregrounding her undertaking of this action in discourse. Perhaps even more interesting is how this is a repaired construction following S's abandonment of 'And I think we can' (line 8), which *re-orient*s the forthcoming talk as building on T's idea rather than delivering her own. This provides further evidence for S's discursive foregrounding of her talk's contingency on previous speaker contribution. Towards the end of the turn (lines 14-15), S further extends T's idea by proffering an additional argument backing up this suggestion – that the event not only promotes their product, but also helps improve the students' health. Thus, through the action of extending, S turns the development of a point or argument that could otherwise be accomplished by an individual speaker into an interactional, joint enterprise.

#### IV. Discussion

The analysis above has illustrated three kinds of conversational actions in a student-candidate's turn that constitute a response contingent on previous speaker contribution:

*(1) Formulating previous speakers' contributions*

- Paraphrasing or summarizing (e.g. through 'notionalization') previous speakers' talk in one's own words; could be transforming the previous speakers' original ideas

*(2) Accounting for (dis)agreement with previous speakers' ideas*

- Providing reasons for supporting/contesting previous speakers' ideas or viewpoints, thereby topicalizing the main idea or particular elements in the previous speakers' talk

*(3) Extending previous speakers' ideas*

- Developing previous speakers' ideas further through providing examples, more specific details, or additional arguments; sometimes with explicit reference to the previous speakers and their talk

Within the group speaking assessment context in Hong Kong, *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution* is accorded much importance as a *de facto* construct feature (McNamara, Hill, & May, 2002) of interactional competence. This is reflected in student-candidates' discourse in the assessed interactions and their stimulated recall comments as well as in teacher-raters' interview comments (see AUTHOR, 2015a). This construct feature is also reflected explicitly or implicitly in two of the four assessment criteria for the SBA Group Interaction task. Table 1 shows relevant descriptors in the highest bands.

	(II) Communication Strategies	(IV) Ideas and Organization
<b>Level 6</b>	Can interact without the use of narrowly-formulaic expressions	Can consistently respond effectively to others, sustaining and extending a conversational exchange
<b>Level 5</b>	Can mostly interact without the use of narrowly-formulaic expressions	Can respond appropriately to others to sustain and extend a conversational exchange.

(HKEAA, 2014, p.12)

**Table 1** Level descriptors relevant to the IC feature of contingent responses

For the eight student-candidates whose responses were focused on in Extracts 1-8, six of them were awarded Level 5 or above in criteria II and IV<sup>1</sup>. Note that this is for illustration only, and further empirical analysis is necessary before any claim between this feature and the IC-related score can be made. However, note also that, for the level descriptors in criterion (IV), Ideas and Organization, what constitutes responding 'effectively' or 'appropriately' is left for teacher-raters to interpret. This paper has helped unpack these descriptions such as 'can respond effectively' or 'can respond appropriately' by identifying three possible conversational actions to produce contingent responses.

The importance of this construct feature is also evidenced in the 2012 and 2013 examination reports for the external speaking exam in the HKDSE, where the following comments were made about higher-scoring candidates' performance (boldface emphasis added):

Examiners commented that better candidates... showed an ability to **follow up what was said by the previous speaker**...

(HKEAA, 2013a, p.181)

Such candidates [those awarded top marks] also tended to be those who **actively engaged in listening** to others [sic] contributions **to adapt and modify what they had planned to say** in order to attempt to produce a coherent discussion.

(HKEAA, 2012, p.181)

In contrast, the examiners lamented that many candidates did not display such an ability or effort in relating their own talk to that of previous speakers':

[M]any candidates... treat[ed] the group interaction as an opportunity to present a pre-prepared speech... rather than genuinely interacting with other candidates... Such candidates also scored less in Ideas and organization than they may have if they had tried to **build on the ideas presented by their fellow group members**.

(HKEAA, 2012, p.180)

The examiners made the following general recommendations to candidates:

Candidates are advised **to listen attentively** to the contributions by other candidates and provide appropriate responses to each other **rather than just focusing on their own prepared contributions**.

(HKEAA, 2013a, p.182)

Interestingly, similar features were found to be salient to raters of a paired oral assessment in May (2011), and affected the extent to which the raters perceived the exchange as involving 'authentic interaction': whether the candidates demonstrated inclusion of co-participants and their ideas in their talk, or engaged in long monologues delivering their own ideas, 'talking *at* rather than *to* each other' (p.137).

Recurrent in the examiners' comments were remarks about the importance of (1) listening to and understanding co-participants' talk and (2) linking one's own talk to that of previous speakers'. These two features are inextricably related in interaction, in that producing a response where its substantive content is contingent on a previous speaker's contribution depends, in most cases, on the current speaker having listened to and understood the prior talk. Precisely due to this dependency, the production of such responses can be taken as evidence of the current speaker's adequate comprehension of the prior talk. This evidential link is particularly relevant within the context of a speaking assessment, where we need displays of publicly available evidence of competence which are 'visible to' and assessable by the raters. As May (2011) puts it, 'Ascertaining the extent to which a candidate understood his or her partner cannot be done simply through observation, so the response of the partner to what had been said was often seen as evidence of understanding' (p.134).

I therefore argue that *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution* is a highly relevant feature that could be included in the construct of interactional competence within

the context of paired/group speaking assessments. Contingent responses which refer back to or topicalize elements in a previous speaker's talk serve as evidence of a candidate's comprehension of co-participants' talk, and the mutual exchange of such responses among a pair/group of candidates seems to be perceived by raters as part of what defines whether 'interaction' is happening (May, 2011). Conversely, it has been widely documented in various studies (e.g. AUTHOR, 2015a; Galaczi, 2008; Gan, 2010; Luk, 2010; May, 2011) that other forms of displaying understanding, such as acknowledgement tokens (e.g. 'mm'), agreement tokens (e.g. 'yeah'), and formulaic responses (e.g. 'that's great', 'I agree with you'), are considered inadequate responses to co-participants in speaking assessment contexts, especially when followed immediately by the delivery of the current speaker's own ideas.

Contingent responses might relate to other features of IC as well. It may have implications for how interactive listening is evidenced or measured when it is assessed in speaking tasks. Interactive listening has mainly been operationalized in terms of listener support moves (e.g. backchanneling, formulaic responses), and such conversational objects are legitimate and pervasive in everyday interactions as understanding displays. Nevertheless, some speaking assessment studies have shown that there are reservations about their credibility as evidence of comprehension of previous speakers' talk. For example, Ducasse and Brown (2009) observed that supportive audible feedback<sup>2</sup> can and has been used by candidates to mask their non-comprehension of co-participants' talk, such that raters 'might potentially jump either way with such behaviour, interpreting them positively (providing interactional support) or negatively (a lack of comprehension)' (p.438). Similarly, the SBA teacher-raters in the author's own study were skeptical of student-candidates' comprehension of co-participants' prior talk when they used only formulaic expressions (e.g. 'I agree with you') to respond (AUTHOR, 2015a). As for the three types of contingent responses (formulating, accounting, extending) analyzed here, because their propositional content is co-referential with the previous speaker's talk, and the production of these responses hinges on having understood the preceding talk, they constitute stronger evidence of comprehension. These responses correspond to what Waring (2002) terms *substantive reciprocity* – 'recipient practices that are less minimal in nature' (p.453), and which display understanding in a 'more precise and engaged fashion' (p.455). Apart from its relation to interactive listening, producing contingent responses or not also seems to contribute to a

*collaborative* vs. *parallel* pattern of interaction (Galaczi, 2008), and relates to the varying extent of developing others' topics (Galaczi, 2014).

As mentioned, owing to the exploratory nature of this study, where the feature of contingent responses has emerged out of analytic induction, further analysis of candidate discourse is needed to tease out variations in the production of contingent responses among candidates of different proficiency levels. However, based on observations among student-candidates in the data, some speculation about performance across levels could be made. Lower-proficiency candidates might be unable to produce contingent responses, but resort to token or formulaic responses (e.g. A, R, and D in Extract 6). Mid-proficiency candidates might produce some contingent responses, able to refer back to the topic or gist of previous speaker contribution in a 'notionalized' form with one word or phrase (e.g. T in Extract 3), and give brief reasons for agreeing/disagreeing (e.g. Y in Extract 6). Higher-proficiency candidates would be able to formulate previous speakers' ideas with conceptual and linguistic transformation (e.g. J in Extract 2); provide well-developed counter-arguments to account for disagreeing (e.g. K in Extract 5); and/or extend the previous speakers' ideas relevantly through examples, additional details, or further arguments (e.g. E in Extract 7).

## V. Conclusion

Taking a conversation analytic methodological approach, this paper has demonstrated how students discursively construct their interactional competence through *producing responses contingent on previous speaker contribution*, and has argued for the inclusion of this feature in the construct of interactional competence within the context of paired/group speaking assessments. It is worth emphasizing that the objective and nature of this study was to provide a thick description of the interactional phenomenon. While the study did not control for test-taker characteristics within/across groups as in an experimental design, the data have the benefit of ecological validity, having been collected from actual school-based assessment events<sup>3</sup> within the HKDSE. This study also focused on in-depth qualitative analysis of a small data set, and while it did not yield immediate insights on the proficiency implications of the IC feature, this approach does prevent premature categorization of interactional phenomena (Schegloff, 1993; ten Have, 2007) or a reductionist representation of the phenomena (Galaczi, 2008, 2014; Psathas, 1995). I would argue that such thick description of the nature of contingent responses lays the



groundwork for, and is prerequisite to, quantitative analysis of correlations between contingent responses and IC scores, and variations of the three conversational actions across different proficiency levels. It is also worth cautioning that the scoring of IC features is likely to be far more complex. For example, regarding contingent responses and the three conversational actions to produce them, it is not a simple case of 'the more, the merrier'. Higher frequencies of using these actions may, but do not necessarily, reflect higher IC. Importantly, the relative quality of these responses is also critical. For instance, compare the more sophisticated formulation by J in Extract 2 with the simpler, 'notionalized' formulation by T in Extract 3.

Teacher-raters' comments on student-candidates' responses involving formulating, accounting, and extending would have been helpful to triangulate and strengthen the CA findings: The rater(s) are as important as the candidates within the participant configuration of a paired/group speaking assessment, yet how they interpret the candidates' interactional actions and achievements cannot be 'retrieved' through analysis of the candidate discourse. However, while the larger study did collect teacher-raters' stimulated recall data, the teachers' comments did not focus specifically on evaluating the three conversational actions, as these actions were categories emerging from the conversation analysis of the candidate discourse after the data collection stage had completed. As a preliminary observation, there is alignment between the conversational actions identified through the CA and *some* of the teacher-raters' stimulated recall comments (AUTHOR, 2015a). Methodologically, therefore, this study suggests that there is merit in combining the CA of candidate discourse and the corresponding stimulated recall comments by raters. However, there is also the challenge in research design for synchronizing, as closely as possible, the analysis of candidate discourse and the collection of raters' stimulated recall comments.

The IC literature reviewed in this paper also points to some avenues for future research. As discussed, IC as operationalized in speaking assessments (as reflected in rating scales) and speaking assessment research (including my own) seems to be somewhat different from how IC is conceptualized in the L2 learning literature. Thus, there is still some way to go in bridging the two strands of IC research and in aligning their findings and conceptualizations of IC for more productive operationalization of the construct in learning and assessment. It would be interesting to see more research examining candidates' performance at different levels in light of findings from the L2 IC development literature (e.g. diversification of methods/techniques for interaction),

with a view to creating rating scales that more accurately reflect L2 IC development, recognizing that the ability to interact is becoming an integral part of the speaking construct.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The other two students, Y in Extract 6 and S in Extract 8, both scored Level 4 in criterion II and Level 5 in criterion IV.

<sup>2</sup> Or *listener support moves* in Galaczi (2014)

<sup>3</sup> Except Extract 8

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## **Appendix A**

### Discussion task prompts

#### *For Extract 1*

#### ***Freaky Friday***

1. Based on the movie, what is the misunderstanding that exists between Mrs Coleman and Anna?
2. What would happen if they had to stay in each other's bodies for the rest of their lives?

#### *For Extract 2*

#### ***Avatar***

1. What is the main message of the movie?
2. Which aspect do you think is the most important part of the movie (e.g. soundtrack, special effects)?
3. What do you think of the actors' performance?

#### *For Extract 3*

#### ***Toy Story 3***

1. Who is/are your favorite character(s)?
2. Which aspect do you think is the most important part of the movie (e.g. soundtrack, special effects)?
3. If you could change one part of the movie, what would it be?

For Extracts 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

***Elective module: Workplace Communication***

You are a member of the marketing team of Fabulous International Company. Your company is going to promote an existing / a new [product\*]. Discuss with your team ways to promote this product.

You should include the following:

- the target group(s)
- special features of the product
- strategies to promote the product

\*Tablet computer (Extracts 4 and 6), skincare product (Extract 5), smartphone (Extract 7), health product (Extract 8)

**Appendix B**

Transcription symbols

,	Continuing intonation
?	Rising, question intonation
.	Falling, stopping intonation
-	A cut-off of the preceding sound
[word	Onset of overlapping speech
= =	Latching of successive talk, of one or more speakers, with no interval
(0.4)	Timed pause (in seconds)
(.)	An untimed short pause. Number of dots indicates relative length of the pause.
(word)	Transcriber's best guess of the word(s) uttered
((comment))	Transcriber's comments
<u>Underline</u>	Indicates emphasis of individual syllables or words
WORD °word°	Parts of talk louder / quieter than the surrounding talk
↑↓	Shifts into higher / lower pitch
hhh	Out-breaths and in-breaths, length proportional to number of 'h's

Lam, D.M.K. (2018). What counts as 'responding'? Contingency on previous speaker contribution as a feature of interactional competence. *Language Testing*, 35(3).

.hhh	
>word< <word>	Parts of talk faster / slower than the surrounding talk
wo(h)rd	Laughter within speech
\\word \\((action))	Beginning of non-verbal action simultaneous with speech
wurd{word}	Spelling indicative of the way the word is pronounced. The word within the curly brackets is transcriber's guess of the word uttered.
.....	The rest of the turn omitted